

Deaf Mentor Role

What is the role of a Deaf Mentor?

- A Deaf Mentor is a specially trained Deaf adult who is fluent in American Sign Language and participates in Deaf Community events.
- Deaf Mentors have been selected for their ability to work with families of young deaf children and for their flexibility in understanding the variety of educational and communication options available to deaf children.
- Deaf Mentors establish regular weekly visits with the family for 1 to 2 hours.

These visits occur in the child's home and/or community. The Deaf Mentor will:

- teach the family sign vocabulary and principles of American Sign Language
- model interactions with the child using ASL and demonstrate communication techniques
- share aspects of Deaf culture and information about events in the Deaf Community

Who is eligible for the Deaf Mentor Project?

You may be interested in the Deaf Mentor Project if....

- You have an infant or young child up to kindergarten age, who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Your child will be using sign language as a way to communicate.
- Your family is interested in improving visual communication with your child.
- You want to promote positive self-esteem for your child through a Deaf mentor role model.

Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach (WESP-DHH Outreach) supports children who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind by providing a broad array of services to families, and educational programs. Services are provided at no cost and are based on the needs of each individual child.

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Deaf Mentor Project

Wisconsin Educational Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach

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About the Deaf Mentor Project

The Deaf Mentor Project is designed to:

- ▶ increase the family's ability to successfully communicate with their deaf child through sign language.
- ▶ provide parents with opportunities to identify their child's subtle communication attempts and to evaluate their child's strengths in communicating.
- ▶ increase parent's appreciation for and understanding of American Sign Language (ASL), Deaf Culture, and the Deaf Community.
- ▶ support the child's development of language, communication, and self-identity through use of American Sign Language and the ability to interact with a Deaf adult role model.



Deaf Mentor Project Communication Approach

How does the Deaf Mentor Project increase the family's ability to communicate with their deaf child?

The Deaf Mentor Project increases the family's ability to communicate with their deaf child by teaching visual communication skills and American Sign Language to the entire family in their home setting. Visual communication skills include the use of body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

Deaf mentors practice techniques for reading stories and playing with children in a natural setting and pace. American Sign Language is taught through both formal lessons and natural interaction. The Deaf Mentor Project promotes development of both ASL and English (called a bilingual-bicultural approach).

What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual-gestural language that is recognized as a true and complete language. The development of ASL can support the development of English skills for deaf children by providing them with a strong foundation in language and frequent and early opportunities for rich and in-depth communication.

What is Deaf Culture and the Deaf Community?

Deaf Culture includes the language (ASL), values, behaviors and traditions of people who are deaf. This group of people is referred to as the "Deaf Community." Deaf community members look at deafness as a cultural difference, rather than a disability.



It Takes a Village...

The Deaf Mentor is one member of a team of professionals serving families.

The Deaf mentor works with families and their child's educational team (the Birth to 3 Program or school district). This team may include the child's teachers, therapists, and/or other professionals.

The perspectives and information shared by the Deaf Mentor, along with the rest of the team, can assist the family in making educated decisions and set goals regarding the communication and educational needs of their child. The Deaf mentor can participate in the child's IFSP or IEP meeting and can coordinate their mentoring with the activities of other professionals working with the child (including the support of ongoing school curriculum).